

JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY INFORMATION

AGENCY : SSCIA
RECORD NUMBER : 157-10014-10019
RECORDS SERIES : HEARINGS
AGENCY FILE NUMBER : 05-H-03

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

ORIGINATOR : SSCSGO
FROM : COLBY, WILLIAM
TO :
TITLE :
DATE : 06/20/75
PAGES : 82
SUBJECTS : COLBY, WILLIAM

Released under the John
F. Kennedy
Assassination Records
Collection Act of 1992
(44 USC 2107 Note).
Case#:NW 53244 Date:
06-14-2017

VIETNAM

DIEM, NGO DINH

DOCUMENT TYPE : TRANSCRIPT
CLASSIFICATION : UNCLASSIFIED
RESTRICTIONS : 1A, 1B
CURRENT STATUS : RELEASED WITH DELETIONS
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 05/12/98
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS : Box 2

[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

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Vol. 1 OF 3

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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The United States Senate

R360

Report of Proceedings

INVENTORIED

ON 2/22/77

BY BC

Hearing held before

Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities

Friday, June 20, 1975

Washington, D. C.

(Stenotype Tape and Waste turned over
to the Committee for destruction)

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C O N T E N T S

TESTIMONY OF

PAGE

William E. Colby,
Director of Central Intelligence,
--accompanied by--
Enno Knoche,
Assistant to the Director, and
George L. Cary,
Legislative Counsel

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COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday, June 20, 1975

United States Senate,
Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations with Respect to
Intelligence Activities,
Washington, D. C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m.,
in Room S.407, The Capitol, Senator John Tower (Vice-Chairman)
presiding.

Present: Senators Tower (presiding), Hart of Michigan,
Huddleston, Morgan, Hart of Colorado, Schweiker and Mathias.

Also present: Frederick A. O. Schwarz, Jr., Chief
Counsel; Charles Kirbow and Patrick Shea, Professional Staff
Members.

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1 Senator Tower. We will come to order.

2 Mr. Colby, thank you for appearing this morning. You
3 understand that the oath that you previously had taken
4 before this committee is still binding on you and you are
5 still regarded as being under oath?

6 TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM E. COLBY, DIRECTOR
7 OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE; ACCOMPANIED BY:
8 ENNO KNOCH, ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR,
9 AND GEORGE L. CARY, LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

10 Mr. Colby. I do.

11 Senator Tower. You understand that?

12 Mr. Colby. Right.

13 Senator Tower. Today we will proceed on the matter of
14 the assassination of Diem in 1963 and I think that the
15 Director would like to proceed in narrative form. So we will
16 allow him to proceed as he wishes, then submit the questions
17 from counsel and members of the committee.

18 Mr. Colby. I might just precede the questioning by
19 a general statement which I can make off the top of my
20 head because I was very closely involved in those days with
21 Vietnam.

22 I served in Vietnam as the Deputy first and then the
23 Chief of Station from February 1959 to June 1962. When I
24 returned from Vietnam I became Chief of the Far Eastern
25 Division of CIA, the division which dealt with the operations

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1 in Vietnam, and remained in that position until 1968.

2 I think it can be said that the problems with respect
3 to President Diem began to grow in the United States with
4 the growth of the Communist infiltration and insurgency
5 in Vietnam and the consequently degree of attention that it
6 got from our press. This focussed particularly on the weak-
7 nesses of the Diem regime and some of the misdeeds involved
8 in it.

9 There was a high degree of criticism and our government
10 was faced with the problem of supporting a regime against
11 Communist insurgency that had defects and this gave our
12 government a problem as to its position with respect to such
13 a government and such defects.

14 There was concern in the executive branch and in the
15 Congress and in the public about this which dominated the
16 discussion of our policy toward Vietnam.

17 My role in this was to provide intelligence from Vietnam
18 when I was there and to continue to assure that intelligence
19 was provided from here.

20 A good deal of the intelligence critical of the regime
21 stemmed from our reporting from clandestine sources within
22 the government and the business society of South Vietnam,
23 but I confess that my assessment as distinct from the indi-
24 vidual reports sent in was that the Diem regime was about
25 as good a regime as you are going to likely get in the circum-

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stances of the time and in the situation it faced.

In my position as Chief of Station I had a great deal to do with President Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was acting as his special adviser and with particular concern for political matters and general advice on the development of the war. And in my extensive conversations with Mr. Nhu over the years we together discussed the counter-insurgency problem and how it should be organized and what kind of strategy should be applied and we very much agreed that the key to it was to build strength at the local village and hamlet level to engage the population in the battle so that the Communists did not take the battle at that level and pull the rug of support out from under the government and under the military.

Our station and our Agency launched a number of programs of this nature in Vietnam of supporting the growth of the local village defense in the early sixties. We developed, as I remember, something on the order of some tens of thousands of armed villagers up in the high lands, down in the Delta, and various other places, and these became experimental models for the development of Mr. Nhu's concept of this strategic hamlet. He then documented the strategic hamlet as a concept and imposed it upon the Administration of Vietnam with his brother, the President's, full support, began the program of the strategic hamlet. There was a

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1 considerable degree of fakery involved in the reporting, which
2 was known to the government. They knew it wasn't all it was
3 cracked up to be, that the administration itself was inclined
4 to look for paper results and visible appearances rather than
5 the reality of involving the population in the fight, but
6 nonetheless, as a big program and as a long-term which must
7 be the nature of such a program, it was a beginning and it
8 began to have an effect. It was formally begun in the fall
9 of 1961, and about a year or year and a half later it began
10 to show some results and begun to pick up some momentum.

11 At this time the government had troubles with the
12 Buddhists which broke out in a riot up in northern Vietnam,
13 in Hue, a riot in which a grenade was dropped and there were
14 various allegations as to who dropped the grenade.

15 The Buddhists went into essential opposition to the
16 government during this period. You will recall it was
17 particularly marked by the self-immolation of one of the
18 Banzis in a fire that he poured gasoline on himself. This,
19 of course, was a dramatic presentation of the fact that there
20 were a lot of people opposed to President Diem in Vietnam
21 and this raised this particular political problem for our
22 government as to the degree to which it should support
23 President Diem.

24 The issue grew during the summer of 1963 in the United
25 States Government, essentially dividing the government into

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1 two positions. Certain people -- and I will identify
2 which departments and agencies later -- but certain believed
3 that the Diem regime was both reprehensible and would arouse
4 such opposition from its own people that it would be impossible
5 for it to rally the necessary support to win the conflict against
6 the Communists. They held this position in good faith.

7 The other people believed that there was enough going on
8 in the countryside where the real world was being fought,
9 that these political issues were essentially educated city-
10 urban problems and that the basic conflict in the countryside
11 was gradually being built through the strategic hamlet
12 program and other programs to other counter-insurgency pro-
13 grams and that the key to the problem was our interest in
14 supporting Vietnam against a Communist insurgency and a
15 Communist takeover, and that that part of the war seemed to
16 be moving along with problems but, nonetheless, seemed to be
17 moving along, and that we were not apt to get a better govern-
18 ment if we went into any change of government or opposed the
19 government.

20 There was very little doubt following the general con-
21 sensus of policy at that time that it was in the United
22 States' interests to help preserve a free South Vietnam as
23 against a Communist takeover in South Vietnam. But this
24 debate waged in the United States government all during the
25 summer of 1963.

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1 Essentially the Defense Department and CIA, particularly
2 John McCone, with myself operating as his principal assistant
3 for this question, took the position that the main war was
4 in the countryside, that it did not seem to be going too
5 badly, they had serious political problems in the center, but
6 that it was in the United States' interest to continue to
7 support the war against Communist takeover in the countryside.

8 The opposition to that position was primarily indicated
9 in the State Department and to some extent in the National Secur-
10 ity Council staff, which believed that it would be impossible
11 to carry on the war under the degree of political upset and
12 dissidence that the government in Vietnam faced, and conse-
13 quently, we should look into alternatives.

14 In August of 1963, CIA was asked by our government to look
15 into whether the generals would run a coup and we went out
16 and we made contact with several of the generals.

17 Senator Tower. Would you yield at that point?

18 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

19 Senator Tower. You were head of the station there up
20 through 1962, is that right?

21 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir; through June of '62 -- May of '62.

22 Senator Tower. You were back in the Agency?

23 Mr. Colby. I was back in Washington from there on.

24 Senator Tower. What was your position?

25 Mr. Colby. Chief of the Far East Division, which was the

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1 operational division dealing with the Far East, and including
2 Vietnam, of course.

3 The August search to find out whether the generals
4 would run a revolt against Ngo Dinh Diem and replace him
5 turned out, after we consulted various of them, we were told
6 it was not feasible, they were not going to do it, and this,
7 probe then was closed off at the end of August, more or
8 less, or early September.

9 We are pretty sure that some of our probes came to the
10 attention of Mr. Ngo Dinh Nhu and he knew we were looking
11 around in this and this intensified the attention which existed
12 between the government and the United States.

13 You will recall also at that time when we were
14 changing our Ambassador from Ambassador Nolting to Ambassador
15 Lodge that the government took the intervening week or
16 two, the one was gone and the other had not arrived, to raid
17 the Buddhist pagodas and essentially suppress the Buddhist
18 dissidents. This followed the example applied by President
19 Diem to a similar suppression of religious sects which were in
20 opposition to him in 1955. He went out and suppressed this
21 kind of active dissidence justifying it in his mind and publicly
22 as not accepting this kind of dissidence during a wartime
23 situation which the country was faced with.

24 There was a question of whether he was effective in
25 suppressing it or whether it had so adversely affected his

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1 image here in the United States and had so intensified the
2 feeling of dissent within the educated class in Saigon and
3 in the cities that he had weakened himself rather than
4 strengthened himself, but that was the political evaluation
5 of that issue that you would have to make during that period.

6 As I said, late in August a telegram was sent out by the
7 State Department, one Saturday afternoon, which was taken by
8 the mission in Saigon as a directive to go ahead and plan
9 for the overthrow of President Diem. This has been covered
10 in various publications, memoirs and so forth, during that
11 period.

12 I was not aware of this telegram before it went out. I
13 was somewhat shocked to find out that it had gone out with what
14 appeared to be very little consultation around Washington,
15 but at that point it was policy because it was stated that
16 that had been approved by Hyannis Port, was the reference point,
17 that the policy, the general policy. But as I said, our
18 problems at that time came out to nothing and there was
19 continuing debate as to what should be done or what could
20 be done about this.

21 In the meantime, the generals that we had talked to
22 and we had contact with, and through one of them the principal
23 figure was a Mr. Conein, I think you are going to receive
24 testimony from -- was a CIA officer who had served in Indochina

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1 some years before and had met various of these generals when
2 they were young officers and had a very good personal
3 relationship with them. We maintained him there as a way of
4 maintaining liaison with the significant people in the
5 Vietnamese picture. He was told that they would come back
6 to him if the generals decided to move and the policy, how-
7 ever, of the United States was under continuous debate during
8 September and October.

9 There were debates and messages exchanged back and forth
10 to Saigon. Many of the more sensitive messages were sent
11 through CIA channels but were actually composed and written
12 or policy stated, whatever, through a joint governmental
13 approach toward it involving the highest officials of the
14 State, Defense Department and the White House in this continu-
15 ing debate and discussion as to what to do.

16 There are some very clear indications of our policy
17 in these cables but also in the open a lot of things were
18 done. These were done with the rationale of putting
19 pressure on President Diem and the government to particularly
20 remove Ngo Dinh Nhu from the country to bring about certain
21 changes of policy in the Vietnamese government that we thought
22 were necessary to improve its performance in order to make it
23 more acceptable to us and also with the line that this would
24 make it more effective in fighting the war that they were
25 facing.

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11

1 Among these were the suspension of P.L. 480 aid, the
2 suspension of the Commodity Import Program, certain of these
3 things. There was criticism given in the press conferences
4 about the government's performance, and so forth, and all
5 these were read by the generals as a growing disassociation of
6 the United States from the support of President Diem.

7 In the various contacts the generals did request whether
8 we would stand aside if they ran their own coup and they were
9 given the response in general terms that, yes, we would stand
10 aside and, yes, we would continue the aid program if a
11 successor government took over and looked reasonably able to
12 carry on the war. This could only be read as a green light
13 to the generals.

14 This message was passed through a CIA officer but his
15 credentials were checked by the generals receiving this kind
16 of a message with the Ambassador and with the Chief of the
17 military aid group there in Saigon so that there was no
18 question about what U.S. policy was nor that the CIA officer
19 was speaking for the Ambassador and with his knowledge and
20 consent.

21 The CIA officer received a call on October 30 to come
22 over and join the general staff and come to the meeting and
23 essentially sat with them as they continued the operation from
24 their own.

25 They did move to the decision to run the coup and he

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1 sat in the headquarters during most of the time. He went
2 home at one point, and so forth.

3 Senator Tower. He was physically present?

4 Mr. Colby. He was physically present with the generals
5 in a great part and in communication with our station and with
6 the embassy by phone informing the embassy what was going on.

7 With respect to the death of President Diem and his brother
8 Nhu, there had been a suggestion some weeks before, which was
9 received from an officer of the Vietnamese, that there were
10 various things that could be done about the government problem
11 there, and one of the alternatives was the assassination of the
12 brother Nhu and the other brother, who essentially ran
13 central Vietnam, brother Kahn, Ngo Dinh Kahn. Our acting
14 Chief of Station, our former Chief of Station had been re-
15 moved because Ambassador Lodge felt he was too closely identi-
16 fied with Ngo Dinh Nhu and our acting Chief of Station passed
17 this suggestion with two or three others which did not
18 involve this kind of action to the Ambassador with the comment
19 that we not set ourselves totally against this course of action.

20 Mr. Kirbow. I believe this particular matter has been
21 testified to before, Mr. Chairman, and it would be
22 appropriate at this time to put the exact language in the
23 record and the reply then to Mr. McCone sent.

24 The record before the committee indicates that Smith
25 reported that he had recommended to Ambassador Lodge that

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1 "We do not set ourselves irrevocably against the assassination
2 plot since the other two alternatives mean either a bloodbath
3 in Saigon or a protracted struggle which could rip the
4 army and the country asunder."

5 Mr. McCone directed by cable to Saigon of 6 October --
6 "McCone directs that you withdraw recommendation to Ambassador
7 concerning assassination plan under McCone instructions as we
8 cannot be in position actively condoning such course of action
9 and thereby engaging our responsibility therefor."

10 Senator Huddleston. Who was the author of the first
11 statement?

12 Mr. Kirbow. The first statement was the acting Chief of
13 Station, Mr. ⁰³[Smith].

14 Senator Huddleston. Out in --

15 Mr. Kirbow. In Saigon. And Mr. McCone sent the reply
16 back.

17 Mr. Colby. Mr. McCone directed me, I sent the message,
18 and we sent that message before we answered the other aspects
19 of that cable. As soon as we got the message we sent the
20 response on this subject right back.

21 senator Tower. That will be made part of the record.

22 Mr. Kirbow. It happens to be on page 28 and continues
23 on the top of 29 of the exhibit.

24 Senator Schweiker. Would you explain what that means?

25 Mr. Colby. What that means?

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14

1 It means we don't want to have anything to do with an
2 assassination plan.

3 Senator Huddleston. You are eliminating that as an
4 alternative?

5 Mr. Colby. That is part of our concept of what to do.

6 Senator Schweiker. Didn't that contradict what you were
7 saying a few minutes ago? Didn't you say we were in essence --

8 Mr. Colby. We were looking to the overthrow of the
9 government.

10 Senator Schweiker. I see what you are saying.

11 Mr. Colby. But not the assassination in this case of the
12 brothers Nhu and Kahn.

13 Senator Schweiker. The other went forward?

14 Mr. Colby. The other program continued, yes.

15 Senator Morgan. May I ask a question?

16 Mr. Colby, I have heard the words used around. Is
17 that what you call a CYA -- a letter?

18 Mr. Colby. Well, I will say that the motive in sending
19 it was to make sure we did not get involved in it. You can
20 read anything in that sense, of course, but I think the
21 motive was very clear that we don't want to have anything to
22 do with any assassinations.

23 Senator Morgan. The thing that kind of worries me,
24 Mr. Chairman, is that it seems that almost each time just before
25 something happens there always goes out a letter, and I don't

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1 know whether Mr. Schwarz acquainted me with the letter CYA or
2 not.

3 Mr. Colby. I am familiar with it.

4 Senator Morgan. It is a common term used?

5 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

6 Senator Morgan. You understand CYA?

7 Senator Tower. Yes.

8 Senator Schweiker. Not directly related to the

9 CIA?

10 Mr. Kirbow. In this regard --

11 Mr. Colby. Not restricted to CIA.

12 Mr. Kirbow. In this regard I think in fairness to
13 both Mr. Colby and the committee record of their own investi-
14 gation, the cable traffic both preceding this and after
15 indicates it was clearly intended as a position taken by
16 Mr. McCone as Director of the Agency to and action that his
17 Station Chief had taken with the Ambassador and did not neces-
18 sarily represent the whole policy of the government at that
19 point.

20 Is that a correct statement?

21 Mr. Colby. I am almost certain that we did not consult
22 anyone in sending that message. I think probably Mr. McCone
23 and I sent the message.

24 Senator Tower. In that message you direct the acting
25 Station Chief to withdraw the recommendation?

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16

1 Mr. Colby. That we not set ourselves against this.
2 Senator Huddleston. Do you have the dates of those
3 two cables, Charley?

4 Mr. Kirbow. The cable from Saigon was 5 October and
5 the message from here was 6 October.

6 Now, Senator, we have to always remember that we have
7 got the date line probably here on dates. From the traffic
8 and the way it is marked these were immediate action at both
9 ends, and I might also add if we look one step forward to
10 the cable from Saigon of 7 October, which would have been
11 really the 6th here, they replied immediately to Mr. McCone
12 and says action taken as directed, and they went a little
13 further to say since the deputy Chief of Station, Mr. Truhart,
14 who is now a consultant to this committee, was also present
15 when the original recommendation was made, that he had been
16 made aware of Mr. McCone's directive also.

17 Senator Tower. Mr. Colby, could you make available to
18 the committee the full text of the cable traffic on this
19 matter?

20 Mr. Colby. Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

21 Senator Tower. Thank you.

22 Senator Schweiker. I might have missed this. Action
23 taken as directed.

24 What does that mean?

25 Mr. Colby. The action was to go to the Ambassador and

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17

1 withdraw the recommendation that we not set ourselves
2 irrevocably against this course of action.

3 Senator Tower. We have got some double negatives here.

4 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

5 Senator Tower. The Station Chief or acting chief
6 recommended that we not set ourselves against the assassina-
7 tion or that we hold that open as an option?

8 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

9 Senator Tower. What your cable in effect did was remove
10 it as an option?

11 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

12 Mr. Schwarz. Was the message passed on to Conein who
13 was action officer on the scene?

14 Mr. Colby. I can't say for sure. I would say, I would
15 guess that it would be, but you had better ask him for that.
16 I just don't know the answer to that.

17 Senator Tower. Any further questions?

18 All right, proceed.

19 Mr. Colby. Mr. Chairman, when Mr. Conein went over to
20 the headquarters and participated in the command center during
21 the running of the coup, he kept the station continually
22 advised.

23 There were discussions as to the state of the war and
24 how it was going. There were meetings here in Washington where
25 the information was provided to the government, as a whole,

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1 to the senior levels of the White House, State and Defense
2 departments, and the Attorney General.

3 There were a series of meetings and a series of
4 directives given and the news that President Diem and his
5 brother Nhu had been assassinated, were dead, first came to
6 us in a message which started with Mr. Conein, who was told
7 by one of the generals, General Minh, that they had committed
8 suicide, and this was publicly announced by the government
9 at that time. It was on its face incredible to Mr. Conein when
10 he heard it from the General because both were very strong
11 Catholics and he just doubted that they would have done
12 such a thing.

13 There was a withdrawal in essence in the conversation
14 from that story. He was offered a chance to look at the
15 bodies but turned it down.

16 What was actually done, apparently, and we have tried
17 to reconstruct this, is that there was a telephone conversa-
18 tion between President Diem and the generals. There were
19 several of them. And President Diem was very strongly
20 rejecting them, calling them to discipline, and so forth,
21 in the earlier stages.

22 At a later stage, in the early morning of November 1st,
23 he called and indicated that he would surrender if he would
24 be properly handled. The generals then sent somebody down to
25 receive that surrender and found that President Diem was not

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1 there. He had actually gotten out of the back door of the
2 palace and had gone down to another section of the city.
3 He was reported as having been in that other section of the
4 city later. The generals in the interim had been very
5 upset and annoyed with him, and apparently this was not done
6 with Mr. Conein in attendance, he had gone home at one point
7 and apparently was not there, to our knowledge.

8 Apparently the decision was taken by several of the
9 generals, the ones that were present, that he would be executed
10 when they got him. They sent an officer, a small armored
11 unit out to pick him up after they found out where he was
12 down in the other part of town.

13 He and his brother were put in an armored personnel
14 carrier with an officer, a young Vietnamese officer who was
15 an aide to General Minh, head of the coup group, and they
16 went into the armored personnel carrier and when the carrier
17 arrived back at headquarters the two were dead and had been
18 shot several times.

19 That officer incidentally in a rather bizarre aspect
20 of this was himself apparently executed when this junta of
21 generals was overthrown about two months later. Somebody
22 took that occasion to shoot him.

23 I think I can say, Mr. Chairman, that CIA had nothing
24 to do with the assassination of President Diem and Mr. Nhu,
25 that the actual assassination was a shock and a surprise to

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1 everyone in the United States Government when it was announced
2 and was a matter of great concern.

3 In retrospect one must realize that there was, how-
4 ever, a considerable debate about encouraging and supporting
5 the generals in an overthrow of the Diem regime and that
6 the record is very clear that the United States through its
7 overall policy was in support of that overthrow and, of
8 course, I think it is fair to say that in launching a violent
9 overthrow of a regime involved such as this, people are going
10 to get hurt, and in this case the leaders were killed in the
11 process.

12 Now, there is one postscript to this I would like to
13 cover, Mr. Chairman, because it is worth mentioning.

14 When Mr. Conein went to the headquarters on the 30th of
15 October, I think it was, the night before the coup, he
16 carried with him five million piasters. That five million
17 piasters had been put in his safe at his home a day or so
18 before by our Chief of Station. That is about \$65,000,
19 as I remember the figure in the way it adds up. He was
20 specifically asked by the officer who called him telling
21 him to come to bring some money with him. He did. And when
22 he got there he gave some of the money, three million of it,
23 to the officers and it was apparently used to support, to
24 give to certain troop units that joined the coup. The
25 leaders of certain units that came with the coup. I can't

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1 name which ones but the generals, in other words, used it
2 to help attract the support of certain additional units.

3 The remainder he gave another sum, a couple of days
4 later, which was given under his belief, and the request
5 was that he give that to compensate the families of
6 individuals killed during the coup, the soldiers and so
7 forth. This is a frequent custom in the Vietnamese, some
8 kind of an award is given to the families aside from the
9 particular activity.

10 Now, that money stemmed from a station decision to put
11 the money available there. The action of giving the money
12 over was taken at the station level. It certainly was con-
13 sistent in the station's view with an exchange of several
14 cables over the past several weeks which had indicated
15 that the Ambassador said that it may prove necessary to
16 give some money in the course of this activity.

17 There was one message from Washington which referred
18 to whether money would be necessary as a part of this
19 overall effort, and a key quotation which I do not find in
20 this summary but I think is very important, which is a
21 message which was sent, I think, a day before, part of
22 which is quoted in this document -- but the additional
23 part of which is quoted, a message from Mr. Bundy to
24 Ambassador Lodge. The number of the message is 79407. And
25 it discussed that our policy with respect to abstaining

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1 instructions for the U.S. posture in the event of a coup.

2 We will reject appeals for direct intervention from
3 either side and U.S. controlled aircraft and other resources
4 will not be committed between the battle lines or in support
5 of either side without authorization from Washington.

6 This rather plainly refers to U.S. forces becoming
7 directly involved. In the event of an indecisive contest
8 the U.S. will strenuously avoid the appearance of pressure on
9 either side. In the event of failure of the coup we might
10 provide _____ but once a coup under responsible
11 leadership has begun and within these restrictions it is in
12 the interest of the United States Government that it should
13 succeed.

14 That is very clear.

15 Senator Tower. What you are saying is the passage of
16 monies consistent --

17 Mr. Colby. Totally consistent with the policy at
18 that time. There is a question as to the degree Ambassador
19 Lodge was aware of all of this. He was aware of Mr. Conein's
20 dealings over the months in great detail and he has stated
21 that many times.

22 There is absolutely no reservation. He was not aware
23 apparently of this money, of the fact of the money being
24 taken at the time. He had, of course, himself in his own
25 message back to Washington referred to the need for such

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1 money. So, the action by the station was consistent with
2 what he had obviously indicated was part of the thing that
3 had to be done, but frankly in dealing with Ambassador Lodge
4 out there on the details of some of these things it became
5 a habit of the station and they felt his feeling of the
6 degree of detail in depth he wanted to get into things
7 and some things they brought to his attention and some
8 things he really just delegated off, and this one was not
9 brought to his attention.

10 Senator Tower. Mr. Colby, I think I understand the
11 Oriental mentality better than most Americans and I am
12 certain you understand it far better than I, so you would
13 expect really in a military coup that the targets of the
14 coup would be assassinated, wouldn't you, that is their
15 sort of way of doing business over there?

16 Mr. Colby. Not necessarily.

17 Senator Tower. They are not so naive to think they
18 would have bought them a nice villa in Paris?

19 Mr. Colby. Not necessarily.

20 Actually Mr. Conein during that night while the
21 thing was being launched was discussing with them before
22 they made the decision to assassinate, bringing an American
23 aircraft in and bringing it in and putting the brothers on
24 the aircraft and then taking them out of the country and
25 taking them to exile, and they specifically asked him if he

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24

1 could arrange that aircraft. He asked the station. The
2 station went into --

3 Senator Tower. Who asked them to arrange the air-
4 craft?

5 Mr. Colby. The generals asked Mr. Conein. Mr. Conein
6 asked our Chief of Station if we could arrange an aircraft.
7 We then got into a very complicated problem, that apparently
8 it was decided that we didn't want the aircraft to come from
9 either Taipei or the Philippines and it would have to be
10 brought from Guam, which would take 24 hours to arrange, which
11 sounds a little unreal, but that was the answer given.

12 Senator Huddleston. In retrospect, do you think that
13 if the President had been at the appointed place at the
14 appointed time, rather than slipping out to the other section
15 of town, that he might not have been assassinated?

16 Mr. Colby. I think he might not have been. I don't
17 know for sure.

18 I think that they were excited and they were tense and
19 I think they got excited and considered this trickery and --

20 Senator Huddleston. He might be trying to develop an
21 opposition?

22 Mr. Colby. No; I think it was more a feeling that they
23 had been tricked and they were infuriated by it. I think
24 that really is the motive at the bottom of it.

25 Senator Huddleston. That caused his assassination?

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1 Mr. Colby. I think that is the proximate cause.
2 There are lots of other causes.

3 Senator Schweiker. As I understand, then, you are say-
4 ing that, according to your best information, it was a
5 spontaneous decision to kill?

6 Mr. Colby. We certainly had no indication of considera-
7 tion of that before. In fact, the first time we heard of
8 the decision was after they were dead.

9 Senator Schweiker. And at that point where did the
10 reins of power lie with the overthrowing people who would
11 have been responsible?

12 Mr. Colby. The key people were General Minh, General
13 Don, General Khiem and General Xuan. They were really the
14 four key generals in that and the key to the coup was that
15 the last named had joined the coup at the last moment. He
16 had been supporting the government.

17 Senator Tower. Who?

18 Senator Schweiker. Who was he?

19 Mr. Colby. Khiem.

20 Senator Schweiker. The decision to kill him, would that
21 have been made, I am not sure of the circumstance, by all
22 four or by the top one or what?

23 Mr. Colby. There was an element led by General
24 Khiem, I think that is, who advocated he be shot immediately.
25 It was the consensus of the generals however, that he not be

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1 killed at ten past six in the morning, when he was to
2 surrender.

3 In other words, Conein was there at that time and it
4 was the consensus there that he not be killed.

5 Senator Huddleston. That was before he disappeared?
6 Mr. Colby. Right.

7 Mr. Kirbow. The records will reveal they were sitting
8 around on the balcony and Mr. Conein was actually present in
9 the group when the decision was made, it was first-hand
10 knowledge on his part.

11 Mr. Colby. There were a couple of them that did ad-
12 vocate he be shot.

13 Senator Schweiker. We have interrupted your answer
14 there.

15 Mr. Colby. Well, then, you will get this from Mr.
16 Conein. I am just reading from an account he gave us,
17 frankly, because I wanted to be prepared.

18 At about six o'clock they discussed this and an ele-
19 ment advocated he be killed. The consensus of the
20 generals was that he not be killed. Then the surrender
21 arrangements by phone and obvious preparations to receive
22 him and receive a surrender, and that point was the point
23 at which Mr. Conein was asked whether if we could get an
24 aircraft to take them away.

25 So, I think the intention clearly at that point was to

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1 take them away, and we told him it took 24 hours.

2 Then they later, about eight o'clock, they discovered
3 that he was not at the palace that he had escaped in some
4 fashion, then they were looking around for him and they
5 captured various of them, and then at that point Mr. Conein
6 left, went home, and was immediately summoned to report to
7 the embassy. He had received a cable from Mr. McCone to
8 the effect that the highest authority in Washington wanted
9 to know where Diem was.

10 Conein then returned to the headquarters and by that
11 time they had all of the ministers of the government there,
12 the prior government, who were under arrest, or most of
13 them. He then went to General Minh to find out what happened
14 to Diem and General Minh told him that he had committed suicide,
15 and that he asked where he was and he said he was at a Catholic
16 church in Cholan, a part of the city, and Conein indicated
17 disbelief of it and General Minh replied the bodies were
18 back in the armored car behind the headquarters, do you
19 want to see them, and Conein said no, he did not.

20 Conein reported this back to Mr. McCone by cryptic
21 message.

22 Also I might add that another officer that we had
23 worked with was apparently executed about that time, General
24 Tuan. I have forgotten what his first names were. He had
25 been head of the special forces and had worked very closely

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1 with the President, with Mr. Nhu, and with our station, and
2 he had been just executed by the generals that morning.

3 Senator Morgan. What was the exact date of the execu-
4 tion?

5 Mr. Colby. First of November.

6 Senator Morgan. '60?

7 Mr. Colby. '63.

8 Senator Morgan. How many troops did we have in Vietnam
9 at that time?

10 Mr. Colby. On the order of 10,000. I don't now know
11 how many precisely, Senator, but I would say something of that
12 nature.

13 Senator Morgan. We actually were not involved in the war
14 itself at that time, were we?

15 Mr. Colby. We were in an advisory position and I think
16 we also by that time were flying some helicopters for them
17 and doing technical things like that, but we didn't have any
18 combat forces there.

19 Senator Tower. That was largely MAC/V and special
20 forces, wasn't it?

21 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir. The special forces first
22 arrived in Vietnam working for CIA in this country program
23 of developing the villages for their own defense. When
24 there got to be as I remember 750 of them the question
25 arose as to whether they should be transferred out of CIA

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1 into military control, and this was done during 1963; the
2 military took over responsibility for that program and
3 I will have some words to say about that at another time.

4 Senator Morgan. I am having a great deal of conflict
5 in my own mind about this incident more than any other incident
6 we have had.

7 The truth is we set the forces in motion, did we not, that
8 caused the execution of President Diem?

9 Mr. Colby. As a national decision, yes.

10 Senator Morgan. Would you say that the action that set
11 these forces in motion was the cablegram that upset you so,
12 the decision that was made, I understand, without consulting
13 you, really?

14 Mr. Colby. Yes.

15 But I wasn't in a high enough position to take
16 umbrage not being personally consulted.

17 Senator Morgan. I understand that.

18 Mr. Colby. Essentially, yes.

19 Senator Morgan. I am trying to peg it down in my own
20 mind.

21 Is it fair to say that that was when the decision was
22 made to set the forces in motion to bring about the coup?

23 Mr. Colby. Yes; although I believe that the debate
24 and we might even call it vacillation as to what we should
25 do in Vietnam continued all the way up to the end.

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1 Senator Morgan. All the way until the --

2 Mr. Colby. Until the overthrow.

3 Senator Morgan. To the execution?

4 Mr. Colby. To the overthrow.

5 Senator Morgan. It has been a long time since I
6 practiced civil law. It seems to me that once you set
7 forces in motion you can't back away from the consequences of
8 it.

9 Do you follow a different philosophy in the CIA?

10 Mr. Colby. I think I agree with you, Senator. I think
11 when you support a coup through violent overthrow you have to
12 understand that you are taking responsibility for people
13 getting killed. Soldiers got killed and the head of the other
14 side got killed. Soldiers got killed on both sides.
15 Presidential guard soldiers and soldiers in the coup group.

16 Senator Morgan. I apologize for imposing on your
17 time. This bothers me more than anything I have heard.

18 We really were not at war, we were just there as
19 advisers, and yet we set the forces in motion that brought
20 about the execution of these two men.

21 That is a fair statement of the facts, isn't
22 it, and concise?

23 Mr. Colby. Well, I think when you are dealing with
24 foreign forces, Senator, there is a point at which you are no
25 longer responsible for the detailed actions they take because

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1 they begin to take a responsibility themselves for that.
2 You are undoubtedly in the civil law category of a co-conspira-
3 tor. But I think when you are dealing with a sovereign
4 foreign group or power that at some point the decision as
5 to what is actually to be done within a general policy
6 frame is taken by someone else rather than yourself. And
7 I am trying to draw a distinction here which a lawyer would
8 not admit because of the conspiracy.

9 Senator Morgan. I want to say, Mr. Chairman, no one
10 on this committee recognizes any more than I do the need for
11 a strong Central Intelligence Agency, and the one question,
12 the central question that I have been trying to follow ever
13 since we have been in these hearings is is the CIA an
14 arm of government that acts somewhat irresponsibly on its own,
15 or has it been a responsible and controlled agency of
16 government that was carrying out policy of higher authority?

17 I am not interested in placing blame, because as far as
18 I am concerned the recommendations that this committee ought
19 to make are going to hinge to a large degree on where the
20 action originated from.

21 Now, the thing I think in this situation, your
22 conspiracy situation, we might have tried to back away
23 but we didn't complete the back away. Mr. Conein, is that
24 his name, was even on the balcony with the generals. It is
25 sort of like, I really don't --

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1 Mr. Colby. In the overthrow, in the coup, no question
2 about it, and he was there with the full knowledge and
3 approval of the Ambassador and full knowledge and approval of
4 people in Washington.

5 Senator Morgan. I am reluctant to say this, though we
6 haven't had a leak, to my knowledge, if he was there with
7 the full knowledge of the Ambassador, the full knowledge of
8 Washington, on the balcony, on the morning the coup took
9 place, we can't really shirk the responsibility.

10 In other words, we were part of the execution, weren't
11 we?

12 Mr. Colby. We are certainly part of the overthrow. There
13 is absolutely no question of that. And if you talk about
14 overthrows I think you have to accept the responsibility for
15 the fact that President Diem was killed in the overthrow.

16 Senator Morgan. It is almost like as if I had driven
17 to the bank and were sitting in the getaway car for you to
18 rob the bank and in the course of robbing you executed,
19 you shot a man. I am held just as much responsible.

20 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir. That is my point about the
21 accomplice situation in law, which I think is somewhat different
22 in international relations because of the concept of
23 sovereignty gets into there.

24 Senator Morgan. It troubles me. I am trying to see
25 that distinction. It troubles me. Once you let this telegram

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1 back away, the telegram or cable we talked about earlier, that
2 Cosein then, it seems to me what makes me think it was a
3 CYA proposition, he delivers a message but he goes out on
4 the balcony. This frankly concerns me more than anything
5 we have heard.

6 Mr. Colby. Remember, this was a couple weeks before,
7 that the thought of assassination was not aimed at President
8 Diem, it was aimed at the two brothers who were considered
9 the evil influence in the government, and the thought
10 process was that of those advocating it, the foreigners who
11 were advocating.

12 If you eliminate these two evil influences then President
13 Diem can remain as President and we can patch together a
14 good operation.

15 Now, the idea of removing Nhu from Vietnam was one
16 that was discussed in a great detail and a great deal of
17 pressure was put on President Diem to send his brother out
18 of the country.

19 At one point I made a suggestion that perhaps I
20 could convince him of the desirability of leaving the country
21 for the benefit of his own, of the country itself. That I
22 could go over and argue him into it. That I think is a
23 separable thing from the actual decision to shoot Diem.
24 I think the decision to shoot Diem was a conscious decision
25 taken by the generals which came as a very new development

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1 during the coup, but let's face it it is something that you
2 have to anticipate may take place in the event of an over-
3 throw of a government.

4 Senator Huddleston. Earlier in your testimony you
5 mentioned receiving a telegram from the State Department re-
6 lating to at least investigating the possibilities of a coup.
7 Is it common for a station director to receive direct instruc-
8 tions from the State Department or from the Forty Committee
9 or from the White House or from just where?

10 Mr. Colby. That telegram was a telegram from the State
11 Department to the Ambassador.

12 Senator Huddleston. Is it the usual chain of command?

13 Mr. Colby. That is the usual.

14 Senator Huddleston. For the CIA to receive its in-
15 structions?

16 Mr. Colby. Well, the CIA got a copy of the telegram.

17 Senator Tower. CIA?

18 Mr. Colby. And CIA was in receipt of a telephone call
19 before it was sent.

20 Senator Huddleston. What I really want to know, you
21 as station agent in Saigon, what is the one source that is your
22 ultimate instruction to do something.

23 Mr. Colby. Obviously a station chief has several chiefs.

24 Senator Huddleston. He does?

25 Mr. Colby. He is under instruction and in this case he

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1 was under very specific instruction to keep very closely
2 under the authority of the Ambassador, and not to operate
3 independently in any fashion whatsoever.

4 Senator Huddleston. I recognize the independent aspect
5 of it.

6 Mr. Colby. He was under instruction to follow the
7 Ambassador's directives.

8 Senator Huddleston. Is that the usual chain of command,
9 that once the National Security Council or whoever makes the
10 determination as to what we are going to do, do they then
11 have the State Department convey that message to the CIA through
12 the Ambassador to that particular country, or is that set up
13 separately everywhere?

14 Mr. Colby. I think policy is normally transferred from
15 the National Security Council to the Ambassador. The
16 Ambassador is the President's representative and has overall
17 authority of all agencies in that country and, therefore, an
18 important question like this would be passed to the Ambassa-
19 dor to handle.

20 Now, the other agencies in town would be informed of
21 the policy directive that we might have additional communica-
22 tion as the details as to how to implement them, which in
23 this case were done through directive to our station chief
24 to make sure that he operated very directly and immediately
25 under the control of the Ambassador.

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1 Senator Huddleston. Where did that directive come
2 from?

3 Mr. Colby. From me to tell our station chief that he
4 would act very closely.

5 Senator Huddleston. Where does the director of the
6 CIA fit into this thing? The State Department wouldn't issue
7 an order directly to a station without going through the Director
8 of the CIA?

9 Mr. Colby. Well, in this situation we were having
10 almost daily meetings with senior officials in the CIA,
11 State Department, Defense Department and so forth, in
12 the basement of the White House, and there is no question
13 that this was national policy and hammered out.

14 Mr. Kirbow. In fact, with the President on most of those
15 occasions?

16 Mr. Colby. Frequently. At these meetings, these were
17 the meetings in which Mr. McCone and I argued very strongly
18 that we should not move against the Diem government, we
19 should continue to work with it.

20 Senator Huddleston. Now, in the first survey, in the
21 first check, you found no interest among the generals in
22 conducting the coup? Later, apparently, they were willing
23 to?

24 What kind of persuasion was used to change their position
25 on this?

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1 Mr. Colby. The clear development of U.S. policy
2 against the regime. The most critical thing, I think, to
3 the Vietnamese, and I don't think it was perceived as this
4 important to the Americans, was the suspension of our commercial
5 import program, because this said to the Vietnamese that
6 American assistance is being suspended from the Diem regime.

7 Senator Huddleston. Who in our government was so
8 unhappy with Diem?

9 Mr. Colby. Most of the people in the State Department
10 and National Security Council staff. This became an indi-
11 vidual matter, quite frankly.

12 There is an article here in the Washington Post in
13 September which sort of, I think, pretty clearly states it.
14 U.S. Policy toward South Vietnam has come to a standstill
15 while the Pentagon and CIA on one side of the pot argue it out,
16 with the State Department on the other.

17 Senator Huddleston. Is this '62?

18 Mr. Colby. '63.

19 You can have it.

20 Senator Tower. Let me just say one thing. I think
21 this underscores the difficulty we are going to be confronted
22 with several times on the committee, that is, making a dis-
23 tinction between the CIA acting on its own and acting as an
24 instrument of national policy made by somebody else. We are
25 going to be in the position, I suppose, by hindsight question-

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1 ing national policy today.

2 Senator Huddleston. I am trying to get the chain of
3 command and order in which instructions come.

4 Mr. Colby. In this situation clearly CIA management was
5 opposed to the course of action taken by the United
6 States government, but once the decision had been made as
7 policy action CIA accepted United States policy and implemented
8 it.

9 Senator Huddleston. One final question there.

10 Is there any doubt in your mind had it not been for the
11 United States insistence that the generals would not have
12 ever initiated the coup?

13 Mr. Colby. There is no doubt in my mind. I believe that,
14 frankly, I believe that the five years which intervened be-
15 tween 1963 and '68 were years of chaos leading to the commitment
16 if the war was not to be lost, five hundred thousand
17 American soldiers, and we ended up in '68 with a President of
18 South Vietnam who was about like President Diem.

19 Senator Huddleston. I take it you still think your
20 original decision was correct?

21 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

22 Mr. Schwarz. Was correct or incorrect?

23 Mr. Colby. My position was correct. The original
24 decision I have publicly called a disaster.

25 Senator Tower. I want to recognize Senator Morgan.

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1 Would you yield for a moment for counsel to enter some-
2 thing in the record?

3 Mr. Kirbow. I think in connection with Senator
4 Huddleston's questions that it would be appropriate to show
5 again that the document that is in evidence before the committee
6 shows on pages 4, 5 and a little later -- I will give you
7 the other page -- dated 24 August-- that there was a telephone
8 call from Mr. Harriman to the Deputy Director of Plans in
9 the Agency, which was the only contact shown in the records
10 where Mr. Harriman called Mr. Helms just before 8:00 p.m.
11 and outlined to him the substance of what eventually turned out
12 to be the Department telegram, 243, to Saigon.

13 To Helms: Query: Mr. Harriman confirmed that the
14 thrust of the telegram contained an implicit pull out of
15 American forces and support if the Nhus were not ousted. Harri-
16 man said that the message had been cleared with Hyannis Port,
17 the President, Secretary of State and with Mr. Gilpatrick.

18 There is a latter entry showing that the President was
19 at Hyannis Port, that the Secretary of State, and the Secretary
20 of Defense were all out of the city.

21 Mr. Colby. And Mr. McCone was out of the city.

22 Mr. Kirbow. Yes.

23 This being from the Inspector General's report which
24 has been made a part of the record previously.

25 The State telegram then follows. And while the telegram

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1 is a part of the record I think it is important to show that
2 in addition to the official telegram on 25 August --
3 excuse me -- part of the telegram from the State Department
4 on 24 August reads the Ambassador and country team should
5 urgently examine all possible alternatives leadership and
6 make detailed plans as to how we might bring about Diem's
7 replacement if this should become necessary. You will under-
8 stand that we cannot from Washington give you detailed instruc-
9 tions as to how this operation should proceed, but you will
10 also know we will back you to the hilt on actions you take to
11 achieve our objectives.

12 On 25 August, following that, a cable from Mr. Hillsman,
13 who was Assistant Secretary of State for Far East, to
14 Ambassador Lodge, personally sent through CIA channels, the State
15 cable sent separately represents agonizing at the highest
16 levels. The course outlined is dangerous but all agree that
17 delaying a clear-cut U.S. stand is even more dangerous. It
18 won't be easy for you but be assured that we will back you
19 all the way.

20 This was followed by a cable on 25 August from the CIA
21 headquarters to its Saigon station which reads --

22 Mr. Colby. Which I wrote.

23 Mr. Kirbow. Which Mr. Colby did write and it says on
24 page 7, for your information, CIA not consulted regarding
25 cable being sent separately, which, however, cleared at the

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1 highest levels. In circumstances believe the CIA must fully
2 accept directives of policymakers and seek ways to accomplish
3 the objectives they seek. While have not seen the exact
4 text, understand it invites Lodge's final judgment. Danger
5 in present course of action appears to be throwing away
6 bird in hand before we adequately identify birds in bush or the
7 songs they will sing. Thus suggest a real search for courses
8 of action we might retain. I think this is the important
9 part. The CIA is saying to their people, thus we suggest a
10 real search for courses of action which might retain options
11 in our hands at the same time as taking positive stand rather
12 than waiting for situation to clarify, at which point we probably
13 will be unable to effectuate.

14 This boils down to seeking some middle ground for at least
15 an interim period.

16 So I think that is simply to show, Senator, that while
17 the message went from State to the Ambassador and then they were
18 having their local meetings there, that the CIA position
19 still is against the overthrow was transmitted directly to
20 their station chief.

21 I think also that this same document, which is a matter
22 of record, reveals probably in detail the same things that
23 the witness has testified to here about the urgency of the
24 problem at the Washington area because on practically every
25 page of this record during August, and September, and October,

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1 there is a meeting of either the National Security Council
2 with the President or with all of the Cabinet members who
3 have been involved in this at least once, and in one case
4 three times a day the President met when the situation was
5 still several weeks away from the assassination.

6 Senator Morgan. What are you reading from?

7 Mr. Kirbow. From the Inspector General's report of 1967.

8 Senator Tower. Senator Morgan?

9 Senator Morgan. The first thing, Mr. Colby, the last
10 message I think certainly commends you and your actions. But
11 when was Lumumba killed?

12 Mr. Colby. Lumumba was killed February '61.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Or possibly January?

14 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

15 Senator Morgan. When was Trujillo?

16 Mr. Colby. Trujillo was killed May 30, '61, as I
17 remember. Lumumba, you know, was not killed by anything the
18 CIA was involved in. We did, as I have testified, look
19 into the possibilities but we did not have anything to do
20 with his death.

21 Senator Morgan. I remember that we were thinking
22 about it.

23 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

24 Senator Morgan. Now, of course, during this period of
25 time we were also talking about Mr. Castro.

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Mr. Colby. Yes, and taking steps against him.

Senator Morgan. Now, there was a general in Chile.

When was he killed?

Mr. Colby. He was killed in October of 1970.

Senator Morgan. 1970?

Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

Senator Morgan. Were there any others that we talked about of that you have testified to?

DeGaulle, did you not testify that never to your knowledge was there any discussion at all about deGaulle's assassination?

Mr. Colby. What happened on that, Senator, is that about two weeks ago, I think it was, we got a memorandum from one of our employees who said that he was approached in 1968-67 by a Frenchman, that this Frenchman called for a meeting and he met him and this required some travel.

Senator Tower. This was in a foreign country?

Mr. Colby. In Rome.

Senator Huddleston. He was an employee of the CIA?

Mr. Colby. Our present employee. The other one was an agent.

Senator Huddleston. The Frenchman?

Mr. Colby. He was an agent.

Senator Huddleston. Of the CIA?

Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

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1 Mr. Schwarz. It is in your book.

2 Senator Morgan. Even in the remotest sense could we
3 be linked with that?

4 Mr. Colby. No. The proposal was made and we turned it
5 flat down.

6 Mr. Schwarz. Sent out a cable saying it is a silly idea.

7 Senator Morgan. This business coming out in the press about
8 deGaulle is absolutely false?

9 Senator Tower. The Chairman issues a statement on that
10 the other day. The fact of the matter was the CIA was
11 approached by ²⁷the station chief who rejected it offhand right
12 there on the spot when he was approached with the idea.

13 Senator Schweiker. And relayed back to Washington and
14 Washington --

15 Senator Morgan. To pursue my final question --

16 Mr. Colby. There is another allegation about Duvalier.
17 I knew there was nother one.

18 Senator Morgan. As I understand it, the CIA had no
19 plans or participated?

20 Mr. Colby. We did support a couple of groups to try to
21 make a landing and raise a revolt, a Bay of Pigs kind of
22 thing in there, and they didn't work.

23 Senator Huddleston. In Haiti?

24 Mr Colby. Yes, sir. And Mr. Duvalier died of natural
25 causes in '71, or something like that.

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1 Senator Morgan. From your knowledge of intelligence
2 and history, was there ever any other period in the history of
3 our nation when national policy ever fomented assassinations
4 or coups, except the decade of the sixties.

5 Mr. Colby. I have never studied that from that point
6 of view. I couldn't say a word about the early nineteen hundreds
7 or eighteen hundreds.

8 Senator Morgan. As far as intelligence is concerned,
9 intelligence agencies, have you ever known of any such?

10 Mr. Colby. No. As I say, it is hard to talk about in-
11 telligence and not say that. Assassinations have occurred in
12 intelligence from the days of the renaissance on.

13 St. Thomas Aquinas gave us a very careful explanation of
14 how it is morally justified to slay a tyrant to avoid a
15 more serious difficulty. I still don't agree with it.

16 Senator Tower. I might note in that in 1776 we dis-
17 patched a force under General Schuyler to try to foment
18 a coup in Canada.

19 Senator Morgan. I wasn't being facetious.

20 Mr. Colby. I know it. I just wouldn't want to
21 give you a flat statement on that, I couldn't say.

22 Senator Huddleston. In the coup in Saigon, how extensive
23 was the combat? I don't recall.

24 Mr. Colby. It was quite intense around the palace. The
25 question really about the coup stemmed on whether a particu-

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1 lar armored unit outside of Saigon would join it or not
2 or remain loyal.

3 If that armored unit remained loyal, they would be in a
4 very ticklish situation. That armored unit did join the
5 coup group and fighting only involved the Presidential guard
6 around the palace.

7 Senator Huddleston. Is that where some of the money
8 went? Could that be considered as a bribe?

9 Mr. Colby. I don't know but I wouldn't be surprised.

10 Senator Huddleston. Would that be considered as a
11 bribe to bring them in?

12 Mr. Colby. I don't know where the money went in
13 specific terms, to what units, but it went to somebody like
14 that.

15 Mr. Schwarz. To persuade them to join?

16 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

17 Mr. Kirbow. Or to prevent them from taking action against
18 them while the coup was under way.

19 Senator Huddleston. Were any American soldiers or CIA
20 employees actively engaged in the combat?

21 Mr. Colby. No.

22 Senator Huddleston. Or fire any shots?

23 Mr. Colby. No.

24 Mr. Kirbow. Both our records and later history written
25 by these Vietnamese governments indicates that there was

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1 no involvement.

2 Senator Tower. Proceed.

3 Senator Huddleston. I am through.

4 Mr. Kirbow. I think the question has been raised,
5 and rightly so, as to whether or not the CIA by its continuing
6 contacts may have kept the pot boiling on this thing. It
7 should be read into the record from the Inspector General's
8 report certain cable traffic and other memoranda from pages
9 32, 33 and 35 of these articles.

10 On 9 October the President of the United States
11 at a news conference in connection with the transfer of the
12 station chief of Saigon, Mr. John Richardson, was asked a
13 question concerning the CIA being under control or out of con-
14 trol because there had been some articles in the press that the
15 CIA was running an assassination operation and stated the
16 following.

17 I know the transfer of Mr. John Richardson, who is a
18 very dedicated public servant had led to some question, but
19 I can assure you flatly that the CIA has not carried out any
20 independent activities but is operated under close control
21 of the Director of Central Intelligence operating under and
22 with the cooperation of the National Security Council and
23 under my instructions.

24 There is following that a cablegram from the
25 headquarters to Saigon for the Ambassador's eyes only originated

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1 by Mr. Colby, which states in part, while we do not wish to
2 stimulate a coup, we also do not wish to leave the impression
3 that the U.S. exchange of government or denied economic or
4 military assistance to Nhu regime if it appeared capable of
5 increasing effectiveness of military effort, insuring popular
6 support to win the war and improving work relations with the
7 U.S.

8 The cable urges the contact with Minh press for detailed
9 information clearly indicating that Minh plans over a high
10 prospect of success.

11 In addition to these thoughts, it indicates that the
12 cable had been discussed with the President of the United
13 States.

14 Later, on 10 October, DCI briefed the Foreign Relations
15 Committee and gave the position of the CIA in its operations
16 in Saigon which was a matter of record.

17 I believe that the next comment is very appropriate
18 and should be read into the record.

19 Apparently there was some concern in Washington on the
20 part of Mr. McGeorge Bundy that Mr. Lodge and General
21 Harkins and the CIA should pull back temporarily from the
22 generals and the following was in a cable to Saigon of 24
23 October.

24 Eyes only for Lodge and Harkins from Bundy. There
25 may be danger Nhu is attempting to entrap through Don's

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1 approaches to Conein. Feel quite strongly that Lodge and
2 Harkins should stand back from any non-essential involvement.
3 It seems wise to maintain close control over meetings between
4 Don and Conein.

5 The immediate response on the same day, a CIA cable to
6 Saigon, Bundy from Lodge indicates in part, I have personally
7 approved each meeting between General Don and Conein who has
8 carried out my orders in each instance explicitly.

9 On the 25th of October there was a Presidential meeting
10 immediately thereafter at which all details of this matter
11 were again discussed and are a matter of record before the
12 committee.

13 Mr. Schwarz. I have understood from other sources some-
14 thing that is not in the report, which may have some bearing
15 on the attitude at the very moment of the coup, and that is
16 there was a telephone call from Diem to Lodge in which
17 Ambassador Lodge offered to help Diem get out of the country?

18 Mr. Colby. There is a State telegram, yes, which I
19 don't have, but which Diem called Lodge and said that he was
20 having trouble with -- that an attack, an effort was being
21 made against him by his generals, and that he believed it
22 essential to put this down. He offered to, he urged that
23 the United States consult General Lansdale and me by name
24 because we understood something about this situation there.
25 This was in the afternoon of the coup.

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1 And in the response I believe Ambassador Lodge did
2 mention something about assistance in leaving the country.

3 Mr. Schwarz. Now, in that connection you spoke about
4 the time Conein was on the balcony or somewhere else meet-
5 ing with the leaders and there was some discussion about
6 supplying an aircraft, but then the answer came back that it
7 would take 24 hours, in part because the plane could not come
8 from Taiwan or the Philippines.

9 Why is that such a complicated matter to get an airplane
10 out to Saigon?

11 Mr. Colby. I don't know. As I said, it sounds absolutely
12 incredible at this venture but apparently that was the
13 response received at a request for an air force plane which
14 would not come from either Taiwan, because of the political
15 aspects of it, or I think it was the Philippines, and I
16 don't know the rationale of that at all.

17 Mr. Schwarz. From that I suppose one could draw
18 the conclusion that that represents kind of a bureaucratic --

19 Mr. Colby. I don't know of any other explanation. I
20 frankly don't know of any other explanation.

21 Senator Muddleston. It wouldn't have been an excuse,
22 would it?

23 Mr Colby. I don't believe so. I think it was the answer
24 given by the Air Force when the request was made with that
25 limitation on it that --

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1 Senator Morgan. We had planes in Taiwan and Taiwan
2 never politically objected to our actions flying in and
3 out of Vietnam, did it?

4 Mr. Colby. I don't think so. I think probably it didn't
5 want to associate Vietnam. At that period there was a con-
6 siderable concern that our presence in South Vietnam would
7 somehow be translated into an act antagonistic to Mainland
8 China and get us into more trouble up there if we got too
9 closely involved with Taiwan.

10 Mr. Schwarz. Did we have planes in Vietnam at that time.

11 Mr. Colby. I am sure we had air attache planes there.

12 Senator Tower. Wasn't Air America operating there then?

13 Mr. Colby. I don't think yet. I am not sure.

14 Mr. Kirbow. The largest aircraft available at the time
15 would have been a C-46 or C-47 type?

16 Mr. Colby. Probably China Airlines under contract to us
17 then. China Airplanes, not CAT. CAT was Air America.

18 Senator Tower. Yes, I know.

19 Mr. Colby. I guess you are right, we did have air-
20 craft there for some reason or another, and I don't know the
21 answer as to why we didn't use that.

22 Senator Huddleston. You are saying though that that
23 answer or that decision was outside of the CIA?

24 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

25 Senator Huddleston. The Ambassador himself?

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1 Mr. Colby. I don't know. Conein called our station
2 chief, Mr. ⁰³Smith. Mr. ⁰³Smith looked into it somewhere and
3 came back with the answer that it would take 24 hours.

4 Mr. Schwarz. It doesn't seem to me, based upon your
5 testimony, that the question of whether the directive from
6 McCone to the station chief, that is put in the double negative,
7 but in effect says don't associate yourself with the assassina-
8 tion, the question whether that was passed on to Mr. Conein put
9 against the testimony doesn't seem to make any difference but

10 Mr. Colby. I would suspect he was aware of it knowing
11 how close Mr. ⁰³Smith and Conein were, and they were very close
12 personally and officially.

13 Mr. Schwarz. I think in the testimony, based upon Mr.
14 Kirbow's interview, is going to be he was not aware.

15 Mr. Colby. Maybe not.

16 Mr. Schwarz. Assuming that to be the fact, does it
17 tell the committee anything and what lessons could be
18 drawn from it, what kind of reasons are there for the
19 lack of communication on such matters between persons in the
20 agencies or persons in the agencies and outside of the
21 agencies.

22 Mr. Colby. Well, the proposal had been made by a
23 Vietnamese, it had been passed to the Ambassador. The proposal
24 had been passed to the Ambassador reporting what proposal had
25 been made. The station had commented on the proposal in

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1 speaking to the Ambassador. The station had been instructed
2 to withdraw its comment to the Ambassador. It did. At that
3 point there is no further action taken on the proposal.

4 Mr. Schwarz. Except --

5 Mr. Colby. The proposal didn't get approved, it didn't
6 get rejected either, apparently.

7 Mr. Schwarz. But following --

8 Mr. Colby. It wasn't followed up.

9 Mr. Schwarz. And I understand that is the thrust. But
10 following up on Senator Morgan's questions, if Mr. Conein
11 was the most important action person in connection with the
12 generals, and the telegram was expressing an attitude of the
13 United States about assassinations --

14 Mr. Colby. Of Mr. McCone.

15 Mr. Schwarz. Of Mr. McCone.

16 He was the superior of Mr. Conein?

17 Mr. Colby. Sure.

18 Mr. Schwarz. Wouldn't it follow that it ought to be
19 communicated to Mr. Conein and indeed perhaps more communi-
20 cated to him than anybody else, more important to communicate
21 it to him than anybody else?

22 Mr. Dirbow. Mr. ⁰³Smith was the source of the proposal.

23 Mr. Colby. To the Ambassador. I just want to make
24 sure where the proposal came to him from.

25 Mr. Kirbow. The record does not reveal that here and

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1 he does not recall.

2 Mr. Colby. Conein doesn't remember the incident.
3 Because it might have come in through someone else. That
4 is what strikes me.

5 Mr. Kirbow. He does not.

6 Mr. Colby. The proposal was made to a different officer.

7 Mr. Kirbow. At this time he does not appear to be aware
8 of either the submitted recommendation to the Ambassador
9 or the telegram that came out and indicates he would not
10 necessarily have known from the cable traffic unless he heard
11 it at a meeting which was being run practically everyday among
12 the senior CIA station personnel.

13 Mr. Colby. I have a feeling in my mind, which I would
14 have to examine and clarify in the record, (a) that this pro-
15 posal came to us from somebody other than, through someone other
16 than Conein. We had another officer in touch with other
17 generals and so forth at that period and I don't know whether
18 the advice was passed back through that channel or not.

19 Mr. Schwarz. As a matter of general practice, the
20 attitude expressed by the McCone telegram was presumably
21 important and Mr. Conein was at least a significant actor,
22 whether or not he was the source of the telegram which Mr.
23 McCone responded to.

24 Assuming he wasn't notified, what I am searching for,
25 under your experience, if you can give an explanation in the

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1 practice having to do with compartmentation or need to know
2 or whatever, why he would not be --

3 Mr. Colby. Well, I think that in terms of my experience
4 I would say that this is not a subject that you want to
5 talk about very much. You certainly don't want to participate,
6 stimulate, encourage or assist.

7 On the other hand, if a total independent force has its
8 own independent reasons for proceeding, we hear of these, we
9 get reports of proposed assassinations and so forth, in our
10 regular reporting, and sometimes we warn people and sometimes
11 we don't. It depends on the overall situation. It doesn't
12 have any involvement with us. I mean but it is an intelligence
13 report in a sense and then the action as to what to do about
14 it.

15 I think that, consequently, so long as it is clear that
16 we aren't involved in it, and that is what was wrong with
17 that particular message, is that it indicated support of the
18 idea, and that was immediately responded to.

19 If the message had merely been reported by the station
20 to the Ambassador that this proposal had been made by a
21 Vietnamese, I doubt that there would have been a cable from
22 Washington.

23 Mr. Schwarz. But once you knew the problem existed,
24 and Mr. Conein was the most important action officer with
25 the generals --

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1 Mr. Colby. Oh, yes.

2 Mr. Schwarz. It was not important to inform him of the
3 attitude of the Director concerning assassinations because
4 that attitude only extended to making sure that the United
5 States had no apparent involvement.

6 Is that what you were saying?

7 Mr. Colby. No involvement.

8 Mr. Schwarz. No involvement.

9 If it was, McCone's attitude was the U.S. should have
10 no involvement and Conein was the person most closely asso-
11 ciated with the generals and the subject had come up. I
12 can't understand why he would not as a matter of ordinary
13 course be notified of the McCone telegram.

14 Mr. Colby. Because no proposal of the American involve-
15 ment was made through him. If this is another individual, as
16 I suspect it was. Excuse me. It was Conein. I beg your
17 pardon.

18 In a meeting with Conein General Minh requested a state-
19 ment of the U.S. position, said it did not expect U.S. support
20 of a coup effort but did need U.S. government assurances that
21 the U.S. would not try to thwart his plans. He outlined the
22 three possible plans. One, assassination of the two brothers,
23 keeping Diem in office, encircling of Saigon by various
24 military elements, and thirdly, direct confrontation between
25 military units involved in the coup and loyalist military units

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1 in Saigon. This was early October. This was the first effort
2 to generate an overthrow and this was replied to, this overall
3 proposal.

4 The first step was the immediate response with respect
5 to the assassination.

6 Mr. Schwarz. It is doubly important to understand (a)
7 whether Mr. Conein was notified and (b) if not, why not. And
8 I only have it from Mr. Kirbow's description of his interview
9 that he does not recall being notified.

10 Mr. Kirbow. That is my recollection, Mr. Chairman. I
11 guess Mr. Conein would be the best evidence. He will appear this
12 afternoon before the committee.

13 Mr. Colby. At the next meeting with General Don
14 Conein, under instructions, and I believe that means under
15 instructions from the Ambassador, passed the word that, passed
16 the word consistent with the response really to Minh's sugges-
17 tion of how they would, do it, why we do not wish to stimulate
18 a coup, we do not wish to leave the impression the U.S. would
19 thwart a change of government or deny military assistance
20 to a new regime if it appeared, et cetera, et cetera, to
21 win the war and improve the working relationship with the U.S.

22 The cable urges that Conein press for detailed information,
23 clearly indicating that Minh's plans offered a high prospect
24 of success.

25 The message that came back from the policy levels of the

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1 government in response to the proposal by Minh, which included
2 those three courses of action, was that the United States would
3 not stimulate but it wouldn't thwart, and that it would con-
4 tinue assistance without commenting on any one of those three
5 courses of action.

6 Mr. Schwarz. Then let's see if we can understand what
7 that record says.

8 A proposal was made by Minh to Conein that there
9 were three ways to accomplish a coup, one of which was by
10 assassination.

11 McCone sent back a telegram to someone other than Conein?
12 Mr. Colby. Immediately.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Which said the U.S. should not actively
14 condone assassination. As far as the written record shows,
15 the next contact is between, the next relevant contact is
16 between Conein and Minh and there is no statement in this con-
17 tact one way or the other about assassinations.

18 Mr. Colby. That is right; nor in the message from
19 Washington which dealt with the whole, the three proposals.

20 Mr. Schwarz. So the message from McCone to Vietnam, as
21 far as the written record shows, and we have to explore this
22 further, obviously, suggests that the statement the U.S.
23 shall not condone assassinations just never got past Don to
24 the generals.

25 Mr. Colby. That is right. The U.S. would not involve

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1 itself. That was clear within the U.S., we would not
2 involve ourselves in the coup. But the question of U.S.
3 support of a specific assassination was not passed. There was
4 not specific comment on any one of the three courses of
5 action. Because that option as to how they conduct their
6 coup was left to the generals.

7 Mr. Kirbow. Normally the message from the Director of
8 CIA to its station chief instructing him as to an action
9 that he took with the Ambassador would never be passed to the
10 General?

11 Mr. Colby. No, I was told, he was told to go to the
12 Ambassador and withdraw his somewhat favorable comment about
13 the assassination possibility.

14 Mr. Kirbow. These are not directly related to the
15 subsequent meetings that Conein had with General Minh at
16 all?

17 Mr. Colby. The general made the proposal, described how
18 he would go at it, the three alternate positions, and the re-
19 ply which came from Washington to that was that the U.S.
20 would not stimulate a coup but it wouldn't thwart it and
21 it would continue the assistance thereafter.

22 The option as to which course of action was left to the
23 generals.

24 Mr. Kirbow. Chronologically the report kind of puts
25 that CIA message in the middle of what was going on at that

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1 time when in fact it was kind of in-house traffic, was not
2 intended to be passed on to the generals at all.

3 Senator Tower. Senator Hart?

4 Senator Hart of Colorado. We pursued fairly exhaustively,
5 I think, and constructively, the communications from
6 Washington to Saigon.

7 What I would like to explore a little more is from Saigon
8 to Washington which prompted whatever decisions were made in
9 Washington and were acted upon.

10 You have made fairly clear your position and I take it
11 the position of CIA Saigon was that I think the bird-in-the-
12 hand phrase is an accurate summary of your position?

13 Mr. Colby. Well, I think that was certainly true of
14 Mr. Richardson as Chief of Station, and that really was a
15 little bit the problem that got between him and Ambassador
16 Lodge which led to his transfer.

17 Mr. ⁰³Smith's position was one of being a loyal subordin-
18 ate to Ambassador Lodge. That was clear.

19 Senator Hart of Colorado. We had three basic American
20 presence it seems to me in Vietnam at this time. One is
21 military, one is intelligence and one is diplomatic, CIA,
22 Defense Department, and State.

23 CIA's position it seems to me was pretty clear against
24 a coup, against certainly the ramifications of a coup.

25 Mr. Colby. I wouldn't say every member of CIA believed

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1 that, not by a long shot. There were individual CIA people
2 who thought --

3 Senator Hart of Colorado. I am not talking about
4 individual people's beliefs, I am talking about official posi-
5 tion given to Washington.

6 Mr. Colby. Given to the National Security Council.

7 Senator Hart of Colorado. What I want to know is who
8 was recommending -- I think we are now talking about Defense
9 Department and/or State. Who was recommending to the National
10 Security Council that the coup be persuaded or that we encour-
11 age it?

12 Mr. Colby. I would say that the embassy's position,
13 the political section and the Ambassador, was much more sympa-
14 thetic to the proposition that the war could not success-
15 fully be conducted with President Diem still in power without
16 a major change in his style of operation. However, there is
17 an additional factor in this which was the public pressure
18 on the policy levels of our government in Washington, and
19 in the United States, and I think this public pressure was felt
20 particularly by the people in the National Security Council
21 and by the people in the State Department.

22 Senator Hart of Colorado. That public pressure --

23 Mr. Colby. Was one of distaste for President Diem.

24 Senator Hart of Colorado. And it meshed with what the
25 Ambassador and his political section were saying from there?

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1 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir, there is justification for it.

2 Senator Hart of Colorado. What was the Defense Department's
3 position on all of this?

4 Mr. Colby. The Defense Department was almost totally
5 on the position that the war is in the countryside, that the
6 countryside seems to be going along reasonably well, that this
7 is an urban problem, urban political problem which should not
8 interfere with the main things going on.

9 This was true of the Secretary and General Harkins out
10 there and the Joint Chiefs here and so forth.

11 Senator Hart of Colorado. When you say this thing should
12 not interfere --

13 Mr. Colby. The political problems of Diem with the dissi-
14 dents, political dissidents in the urban centers.

15 Senator Hart of Colorado. Therefore, their conclusion
16 was it was no great matter, we should get rid of him?

17 Mr. Colby. The most dramatic way in which this was
18 posed, this has been described publicly a number of times, was
19 that at one time, particularly the frustrating period the
20 President faced with these two strong positions, he
21 sent two officers, one a general Crewlack, who was an assistant
22 to Secretary McNamara and a Mr. Mendelhay, who had formerly
23 been the political counsellor in Saigon, to Saigon for about
24 five days to make an assessment on the spot and they came
25 back to the Cabinet Room and one sat on one end of the room

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1 and one sat on the other and General Crewlack first said he
2 had been to 20 provinces and talked to 20 province chiefs and
3 30 military chiefs and all that sort of thing and the war
4 business going on basically all right and there were some
5 problems but the thing was they seemed to have a strategy
6 and they seemed to be moving along on it, and Mendelhay said
7 he went to three cities and talked to lots of civil servants
8 and political people and all the rest of it and there was
9 a general feeling that the cause was hopeless because there
10 was so much distaste for President Diem and so much opposi-
11 tion and the general feeling that the war could not be won.

12 And the President, of course, looked at them and said
13 did you two fellows go to the same country? And the answer
14 is they did. They looked at two different parts of the elephant.

15 Senator Hart of Colorado. So to recapitulate the infor-
16 mation before the National Security Council when this coup
17 decision was made, was CIA officially against the Defense
18 Department, officially against or neutral.

19 Mr. Colby. Against.

20 Senator Hart of Colorado. Officially against.

21 Mr. Colby. And State.

22 Senator Hart of Colorado. And State for the --

23 Mr. Colby. Basically for, although I think you would
24 have to say the final policy was that the United States would
25 not sponsor, I guess is the right word, or stimulate a coup,

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1 would not thwart it. If it happened, would continue our
2 assistance to that country.

3 Senator Hart of Colorado. And would keep a bag of
4 money available in case it did and let them know we had the bag
5 of money there.

6 Mr. Colby. The bag of money was not really the CIA
7 Five million piasters, the bag of money was the aid program.
8 That is the real thing. We suspended with an indication it would
9 be resumed and that is a much bigger bag of money than CIA ever
10 handles.

11 Senator Hart of Colorado. Would the coup have gone
12 forward without the CIA's bag of money?

13 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

14 Senator Hart of Colorado. So that was inconsequential?

15 Mr. Colby. That is right.

16 Senator Hart of Colorado. Concerning showing five million pi-
17 asters?

18 Mr. Colby. That was incidental. He had been called
19 over because they had made the decision that they were
20 going to go for the coup and he was invited to go because
21 they had made a commitment that they would give him an
22 advance tip on it and when he came they had already made the
23 decision. There is no question about that.

24 Senator Hart of Colorado. One final question to
25 amend my recapitulation.

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1 Mr. Colby. They had an assurance of American assistance
2 if they wanted it. That they had clearly. If they won
3 the coup they would have American assistance.

4 Senator Hart of Colorado. Even beyond that, if they
5 started the coup we wouldn't let it fail?

6 Mr. Colby. I don't think they necessarily had that
7 assurance.

8 Senator Hart of Colorado. They didn't know that?

9 Mr. Colby. Our embassy had that and our station had no --
10 Senator Hart of Colorado. Conein or no one else?

11 Mr. Colby. I can't say we ever told them that. I just
12 don't know. There is no indication that we told them that.
13 The clear position was that it was their coup and then we
14 picked up the pieces and go on with the war after the coup.

15 Senator Hart of Colorado. Just to amend my recapitula-
16 tion. CIA officially and Defense Department officially
17 against, State Department for, and public opinion in the United
18 States for --

19 Mr. Colby. Basically, yes.

20 Senator Hart of Colorado. And, in your judgment, what in-
21 fluenced the National Security Council decision the most,
22 State Department, Saigon reports, or what?

23 Mr. Colby. I think the general press coverage and general
24 awareness of just the State cables by a long shot. You had
25 a very heavy treatment and frankly Mrs. Nhu didn't do any good

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1 either.

2 Senator Tower. She was bouncing around down in my
3 state making press statements.

4 Senator Huddleston. Was there ever any serious attempt
5 by --

6 Mr. Colby. Excuse me, if I may.

7 I think the answer to your question, Senator, is
8 one that I have used with many foreigners, that you cannot
9 expect the American government to carry out a course of action
10 which does not have the support of its people, that it just
11 won't work, and that if there is no public support of a
12 course of action the American government will move to a differ-
13 ent course of action, and that is the way we run our country.

14 Senator Huddleston. It sometimes takes a long time to
15 filter through, though?

16 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

17 Senator Huddleston. I was going to inquire whether or
18 not there was ever any serious attempt on the part of our
19 government to persuade the President that he should leave
20 office voluntarily.

21 Did we express to him our unhappiness with the situation?

22 Mr. Colby. We certainly discussed Mr. Nhu's leaving
23 Vietnam at various times. I don't remember any. There was
24 almost no contact, direct contact between our Ambassador Lodge
25 and President Diem very, very little contact.

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1 Ambassador Lodge felt that there was really very little
2 that he could communicate back and forth to President Diem.
3 President Diem was a very special character in communicating
4 with.

5 You had to spend about four hours listening to his dis-
6 cussion of the whole situation in order to get a few points in.

7 Senator Huddleston. But the 11th hour telephone call
8 from Diem to Ambassador Lodge would indicate that he at least
9 thought --

10 Mr. Colby. He went to him as the official representative
11 of the American government.

12 Senator Huddleston. He thought we might still sympathize
13 with him and be on his side?

14 Mr. Colby. He said that he was going to require his
15 officers to fulfill their oaths of loyalty to the Constitution,
16 to the Vietnamese Constitution and his office as president.
17 He was very stiff about his position as president. I don't
18 remember the text of the message but that comes through
19 very clear.

20 Senator Huddleston. Wasn't there a telephone call or
21 conversation or a call in which the Ambassador indicated that
22 he would help him get out of the country?

23 Mr. Colby. I believe so.

24 Mr. Schwarz. It is not in your report?

25 Mr. Colby. No, it doesn't really have much to do with our

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1 action.

2 Senator Huddleston. Wouldn't that also have been
3 perhaps the reason he left the palace and went to another
4 location?

5 Mr. Colby. He left the palace because it was going to
6 be overrun.

7 Senator Huddleston. He wasn't going to another loca-
8 tion where he might be picked up by the Americans and taken out
9 of the country, as he was led to believe we would help him?

10 Mr. Colby. We had no contact with him after the coup
11 started after the phone calls.

12 Mr. Kirbow. The record reveals the generals informed
13 him if he did not surrender they were going to totally
14 destroy the palace, and apparently from the record he was not
15 there while he was making these phone calls, he was over in the
16 Cholan district, having left the day before from the palace
17 and having taken his children with him.

18 Senator Hart of Michigan. I think some of us were
19 struck by your statement that there was relatively little
20 communication over this period with President Diem. You mean
21 of any sort or simply with respect to the suggestion he
22 leave?

23 Mr. Colby. By the Ambassador himself. There was a lot
24 of contact. Admiral Felt, who was the CINCPAC, visited with
25 President Diem on the morning of the coup, and the generals

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1 held up the coup long enough to escort Admiral Felt to the
2 airport and put him on the plane to say goodbye. They then
3 repaired to the general staff headquarters and launched the
4 coup. There was plenty of American contact in this sense.

5 Senator Hart of Michigan. I am backing up perhaps
6 a matter of months trying to understand.

7 We took certain actions, P.L. 480, for example, in-
8 tending that it persuade President Diem to fly right?

9 Did not the Ambassador go in and explain to him that that
10 was the purpose for this suspension, or was it just to be
11 understood by osmosis?

12 Mr. Colby. There wasn't very much direct contact of that
13 sort, I don't think. It was clear from the public position be-
14 cause President Kennedy in a press conference, incidentally,
15 referred to the departure of certain personalities, which was
16 clearly a reference to Ngo Dinh Nhu. I have forgotten the exact
17 phrasing of it. But that was clear reference to the fact
18 we felt it necessary and that is really what the issue all hung
19 up on because we had identified Ngu as such a nefarious in-
20 fluence that if we could just get him out of the country,
21 and I mean out of the country, no assassination or
22 anything like that, out of the country, that then we could
23 manage the operation, and that was the official position.

24 I thought it was wrong but at one point I said fine,
25 why don't we go over and try to get him to leave in order

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1 to get over this hump and get back to the war.

2 Senator Huddleston. Was that ever made, did you ask
3 him to leave?

4 Mr. Colby. No, I didn't.

5 Senator Tower. Any further questions?

6 Senator Mathias?

7 Senator Mathias. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like
8 to go back to a statement that Mr. Colby made sometime ago in
9 which he referred to many meetings in the basement of the White
10 House.

11 As I recall, McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow had two
12 small offices down on the ground floor level and is that the
13 area that you are referring to?

14 Mr. Colby. Well, not their actual office but there is
15 a little conference room there called the situation room
16 where this kind of meeting takes place and still does.

17 Senator Mathias. Right. And who would typically be
18 involved in those conferences?

19 Mr. Colby. Oh, at that time Mr. Bundy, Mr. Ball,
20 certainly Mr. Forrestal, Mr. Hillsman, Mr. McCone, myself,
21 Mr. McNamara, Gilpatric, General Taylor, others perhaps or not
22 depending on the situation at that time.

23 In other words, the senior levels of the different
24 departments involved, and generally, I think, generally not
25 the Attorney General. If we met with the President we met in

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1 the Cabinet Room, then usually the Attorney General would be
2 there.

3 Senator Mathias. The President did not attend these
4 meetings?

5 Mr. Colby. Not downstairs. We would go upstairs.
6 There would be quite a few of those where the President would
7 be up there and that would be upstairs in the Cabinet Room, but
8 not every day except sometimes it was every day, when it got
9 particularly hot and heavy.

10 Senator Mathias. Now, when you say every day, does
11 that mean a downstairs meeting or upstairs meeting?

12 Mr. Colby. Downstairs meetings every day.

13 Senator Mathias. It was every day?

14 Mr. Colby. Almost, more or less.

15 And upstairs meetings. Sometimes every day and some-
16 times not.

17 Senator Mathias. And the Attorney General was
18 generally present at the upstairs meetings?

19 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

20 Senator Mathias. But not at the downstairs?

21 Mr. Colby. Not at the downstairs, as I remember. I am
22 dealing with an impression here.

23 Senator Mathias. I understand. And I think what we
24 are trying to get at is a flavor of the direction.

25 Mr. Colby. The Chairman of the downstairs one would be

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1 Mr. Bundy. Chairman of the upstairs one obviously would be the
2 President.

3 Senator Mathias. Did you mention Mr. Rostow as
4 present?

5 Mr. Colby. I think of him as Mr. Bundy's replacement,
6 really, and I am not sure whether he was there at that time or
7 not. Mr. Harriman would come sometimes, as I recall.

8 Senator Mathias. How about Vice President Johnson, did
9 he ever attend any of those?

10 Mr. Colby. He would attend the upstairs ones.

11 Senator Mathias. He did attend the upstairs ones.

12 Mr. Colby. A number of them.

13 Senator Mathias. Did he take an active part?

14 Mr. Colby. No, he did not particularly. Certainly
15 he did not take what amounted to at that time in that
16 community a public position. What advice he may have given
17 the President alone I don't know. I don't recall his being
18 heavily involved.

19 Senator Mathias. Ambassador Nolting has said on various
20 occasions that Vice President Johnson was the principal spokes-
21 man in that circle for decreasing rather than increasing
22 our activities in Vietnam.

23 Did you ever get that feeling in any way at these meet-
24 ings?

25 Mr. Colby. I know that later President Johnson felt

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1 that the whole move against Diem was a mistake. I don't
2 recall anything particularly on the degree of our involve-
3 ment, his feelings about the degree of our involvement at
4 that time.

5 Senator Mathias. How did you get the feeling that Lyn-
6 don Johnson was against the Diem movement?

7 Mr. Colby. Well, he indicated very strongly after the
8 event and I think such as he did say at the time indicated some
9 reserve, but interpreted, as a Vice President doesn't take any
10 kind of a public argument position with the President, it
11 really is not very appropriate in that kind of situation and
12 whatever private position he may have had he would have handled
13 outside of the gaze of the lower level bureaucrats such as
14 myself.

15 Senator Mathias. Ambassador Nolting was very much
16 opposed to any action.

17 Mr. Colby. Ambassador Nolting, of course, was replaced
18 in August. He was in Greece when the raid on the pagotas
19 took place. He was out of contact and was not aware of
20 that. When he did return to Washington a week or two later he
21 took a very active role opposing actions against President
22 Diem to the extent he was invited to participate. And his
23 advice was not accepted.

24 Senator Mathias. His pleas fell on deaf ears as far as
25 this was concerned?

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1 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

2 Senator Tower. Any other members?

3 Senator Morgan. I have one other question. Reading
4 from this report, Mr. Colby, dated August 28, the CIA cable
5 from Saigon, it says Richardson reports that "The situation
6 here has reached the point of no return unless the generals
7 are neutralized before able to launch their operation. We
8 believe they will like and have a good chance of winning.
9 We all understand that the efforts must succeed and that
10 whatever needs to be done on our part must be done."

11 Apparently at that point whatever action we had set
12 in motion Richardson felt was irrevocable.

13 Mr. Colby. You will recall that followed the August
14 24 telegram which essentially told us to go out and see
15 what you can get down. Richardson's feeling there was that
16 we had launched something and that it was going to take place.
17 The generals then came back thereafter and said no, we are
18 not going to do it. That is the sequence that occurred.

19 Senator Morgan. One other question. Who is Marguarite
20 Higgins, the gal who --

21 Mr. Colby. She is a reporter.

22 Senator Morgan. She apparently had all of the facts,
23 didn't she?

24 Mr. Colby. Yes. And a lot of this has been published in
25 all the books that have been written.

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1 Senator Morgan. I don't know I have really heard any-
2 thing that hasn't been published.

3 Mr. Colby. That is right.

4 Senator Morgan. These comments here are almost verbatim.

5 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

6 Senator Morgan. Did you ever ascertain where she got them?

7 Mr. Colby. There have been lots of books written by
8 Mr. Hillsman, Chester Cooper. Various other participants
9 in it have all written books about this period.

10 Senator Morgan. She surely had her facts.

11 Mr. Colby. And Mr. Halberstam and Marguerite Higgins
12 and Mal Brown. A variety of people have written this.

13 Senator Morgan. Thank you.

14 Senator Tower. We have got a vote at 12:30 and if we
15 could I would like to wind this up by that time.

16 Do any of the Senators have questions? If not, I will
17 turn it over to counsel.

18 Mr. Schwarz. I just have one question following up on
19 your first exchange with Senator Morgan earlier in the morning.
20 In focussing on the Trujillo matter and on this matter, both
21 were instances whatever was done was done by dissident
22 nationalists. In the Trujillo case there was some effort
23 after the Bay of Pigs to slow down or pull back. In this case
24 there was some effort to disassociate, although I think not an
25 effort to slow down or pull back.

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1 Is it a fair generalization to make that where the
2 United States seeks to accomplish objectives through foreign
3 nationalists, it is difficult for the United States to
4 control the actions of those foreign nationalists?

5 Mr. Colby. Certainly the foreigner makes his own
6 decisions at various times the degree to which he is going to
7 do one thing or the other. The U.S. cannot control it.
8 The U.S. can assist him, the U.S. can counsel him and
9 advise him, perhaps influence him, but the control, that is where
10 I got, Senator MOrgon, when you are dealing with essentially
11 another sovereign, why there are limits to your degree of
12 authority over them.

13 Mr. Schwarz. So when you start them down or we
14 start them down the path of overthrowing a government, it
15 follows from the comments you have just made and indeed from
16 the record as we have seen it, that even if we change our
17 mind as to whether that is a desirable result, we may not
18 be able to stop it from happening, we may not be able to stop
19 the consequences of the events we have set in motion?

20 Mr. Colby. Yes, except for the point of starting them
21 down. I don't think you can say that the United States has
22 the total decision there, either. Because the decision to move
23 in a certain direction is a decision that they basically
24 make on their own. We may be able in a supporting, we may be
25 suggesting, simulating, indicating support for, but we do not

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1 have the capability of going up and giving them the order to
2 start. That has to be something that develops as a
3 consensus that it is the right thing to do because of the
4 situation.

5 Mr. Schwarz. Both in the Diem case and Trujillo
6 case motivations initially coming from the foreign nationalists
7 so I think from the testimony that at some point it was
8 essential in their minds that this be given a word or action
9 in support by the U.S.

10 Mr. Colby. Yes, sir.

11 Mr. Schwarz. Once.

12 Mr. Colby. It is one of their total factors.

13 Mr. Schwarz. Once that is down, it follows, doesn't
14 it, from what we have gone through, that even if the govern-
15 ment changes its mind about the result, it is no longer able
16 to be sure it can control the result?

17 Mr. Colby. Not entirely. It depends on the
18 situation. I can envisage a situation where we do reach a
19 consensus that we ought to do a certain course of action.
20 We then have reservations about it. We consult with them and
21 we then indicate that we will no longer support it and they
22 then at that point they have the decision to decide whether
23 they have themselves enough force to go ahead with it, or
24 they are so limited that they can no longer go ahead with it.

25 This does occur in various ways of influencing people.

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1 It occurs particularly in an agency relationship. If you
2 develop an agency relationship, not just to be an agent
3 to report intelligence to you, and we are having this a little
4 bit with some of our agents now, that we indicated that we would
5 work together, that they would give us information, we would
6 support them, give them some funds and so forth. If part
7 of the arrangement on our side becomes non-existent any more
8 and our current problem is they are concerned whether we can
9 keep their identity secret, there is an inclination on their
10 part to cool down the activity, and this is happening in this
11 sense today. It also can happen by decision on our
12 part to no longer do that particular activity, and we have a
13 number of relationships with foreign intelligence services,
14 for example, by saying, well, here is a certain program but
15 then we cut it off.

16 One example in this context was the program of
17 American support of the special forces in Vietnam. The
18 Agency was giving support to the special forces. We helped
19 to get it started and formed it up, the Vietnamese special
20 forces. As part of the pressure on the government in the
21 August period and in response to the fact that the special
22 forces with Vietnamese military and with Vietnamese police
23 had conducted the raid on pagotas, CIA was directed to suspend
24 its assistance to the special forces.

25 We did not suspend our assistance to the police or to

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1 the military who were involved in that, but CIA is an easy
2 thing to turn on and off. The other programs are much more
3 difficult to turn on and off. In a simple way I think that
4 has had a certain influence in what they did. I know it re-
5 sulted in the transfer of several units outside of Saigon
6 where we said we would continue to support them.

7 Senator Tower. Mr. Colby, I think that concludes our
8 questioning on this matter. Let me ask you a question that I
9 think is pertinent in the light of the event that occurred
10 last evening, that I will no doubt be quizzed about.

11 Does the CIA maintain any current and continuing contact
12 with any members of the underworld?

13 Mr. Colby. Well, Mr. Chairman, we have penetrations for
14 intelligence purposes of various criminal elements abroad.

15 Senator Tower. I mean domestic underworld.

16 Mr. Colby. The answer, domestically in the United States,
17 not to my knowledge, and I believe we do not.

18 Senator Tower. You have no contacts that would provide
19 you with any information on the demise of Mr. Giancana?

20 Mr. Colby. I know nothing of that demise. I have no
21 connection with it and I can say with, I believe, full
22 assurance, that CIA had no connection with it whatsoever.

23 Senator Tower. It would be inconsistent with your
24 charter to get involved after the fact.

25 Mr. Colby. It would not be only inconsistent, it would

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1 be madness.

2 Senator Tower. All right.

3 Mr. Colby. As I believe Tallyrand once said, it is not
4 only wrong, it is stupid.

5 Senator Tower. Tallyrand lived to be 105.

6 All right.

7 Senator Huddleston. Might we inquire whether or not
8 Mr. Colby had made any inquiry within the Agency?

9 Mr. Colby. I just heard about it on the way in this
10 morning. I certainly will inquire whether we know anything at
11 all about this and --

12 Senator Schweiker. It seems the FBI would be the one
13 to find out.

14 Senator Tower. Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the committee recessed, to
16 reconvene at 2:00 p.m., the same day.)

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~~TOP SECRET~~